

Stranger Herald by TARDIS_stowaway

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016), Valdemar Series - Mercedes Lackey

Genre: Crossover, Eleven just deserves nice things to happen to her, Fix-It, Fluff, Gen, Happy Ending, Like a psychic bond with a magical horse, Post-Canon, Shameless Wish Fulfillment, nostalgic fandom

Language: English

Characters: Eleven (Stranger Things), Original Companion Character(s), Talia (Valdemar)

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-04-15

Updated: 2017-04-15

Packaged: 2022-04-02 00:29:15

Rating: General Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 5,476

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

While destroying the Demogorgon, Eleven accidentally made a portal that dropped her into a new alternate world. Something is seeking her there, something that looks like a white horse. When it finds her, everything changes.

A Stranger Things/Heralds of Valdemar crossover.

Stranger Herald

Author's Note:

No knowledge of the Valdemar series is required, though the story will have more meaning if you've read at least a few books from that series. This was written in response to [a tumblr post](#) prompting people to consider a crossover between their oldest and newest fandoms. That led me to write unabashed fluff about Eleven getting Chosen, because if anyone ever really needed a Companion, it's that poor girl. Set at the end of Stranger Things S1 and a handwavey number of years after the Storm trilogy in Valdemar.

Massive thanks to the amazing [thatworldinverted](#) for applying her able beta skills to this oddball crossover!

Eleven knew she had to end the monster, whatever the cost to herself. Mike and her other friends (friends! how astonishing!) needed protection, so she said her goodbye and drew together the last dregs of her power. She was too exhausted for finesse. Everything she had, she put into pushing against the bonds that tied the atoms of the monster to each other and to the right-side up world. She pushed, and she pushed, and with the strength of her will and her fear and her fury she succeeded.

She tore the monster asunder with her mind, but something else tore too. It felt like that terrible night, the worst of all the terrible nights in the bad place: the night she'd opened the portal to the Upside Down. Once again the world itself ripped open. Eleven fell.

This rip felt different from that portal. Not the same Upside Down world, she thought. A third place. What new monsters might lurk here? She could not stop herself from falling in, but somehow she found one last shred of power to reach behind herself and seal the breach as she tumbled through. Nothing would get out to hurt her friends.

She hit the ground with a grunt. She'd closed her eyes as she fell, and now she kept them closed. Seeing an approaching monster would not help when she was too exhausted to fight or run. But rather to her surprise, after many long minutes nothing had attacked.

This place didn't smell like the Upside Down. The Upside Down smelled like mold and dead flesh and sulfur and worse. This place smelled almost like the woods surrounding Hawkins: rich soil, gently decaying leaves, growing plants. Not quite the same, though.

The air was warm here. Far overhead, she heard birdsong. Eleven opened her eyes to daylight.

She was in a forest, but not the forest she recognized. The leaves were green here, not orange and yellow as most had been in Hawkins. That could just mean she'd moved in time. Trees could change their leaves, she knew. When she was very young, before her powers were so strong, Papa had sometimes taken her for walks around the grounds. Sometimes the trees just beyond the fence were green, sometimes gold, sometimes bare. But these trees were not just Hawkins trees in summer. She thought the bark and shapes of the leaves were different, but the surest sign was how many of them were huge. She thought that if she knew how to ask it, this forest would have no memory of saws.

Eleven didn't trust the forest's beauty or calm. She'd met too many people with lovely, kind faces who treated her with callousness or cruelty. Even though her splitting headache and bone-deep exhaustion urged her to remain lying down, she stood up. Wiping the blood from her nose with the back of a hand, she assessed her choices.

All the directions looked more or less the same, but one was very slightly downhill, so she went that way. Staggering and swaying, she walked. It wasn't until almost an hour later that she realized she should have marked the place where she arrived somehow, just in case it would be easier at the thin place she fell through to make a gate home. (Home? The place where she was raised? No. That was no kind of home. Mike's house? Closer. Maybe it could have become home, but not yet. Not when most of the people in the house didn't know she was there. The right-side up world had birthed her, but

nowhere was she nurtured or fully welcome.) Anyway, there was no going back now.

Eleven was so tired she had trouble keeping her eyes open even as she walked. She didn't see the stream until her foot came down in mud at the edge of a slow, quiet little brook. She lay on her belly, putting her face to the stream to drink like an animal. The water was earthy-tasting, but in her thirst it was the most wonderful thing she'd ever tasted. Well, aside from Eggos.

When she had drunk her fill, she looked around more carefully. Her eyes widened with joyous surprise. Right across the stream, there was a patch of blackberries! She knew that wild berries were not all safe, but these looked just like the ones she'd eaten before. (Where she grew up, they never gave her candy or waffles or anything deliciously sweet like that, but sometimes there was fruit. Fruit contained nutrients that might aid her abilities.) She splashed across the stream and put one into her mouth warily. It burst on her tongue with a perfect sweet-tart flavor. Caution demanded that she go slowly and make sure the berries sat well in her stomach. Caution had no chance in the argument with her body's demands for nourishment.

She picked berries as fast as she could, heedless of the thorns that cut her hands. Blood mingled with purple juice on her fingers. She licked it all clean. Soon she'd eaten all the berries on the little patch. It barely took the edge off her hunger, but it was enough for that hunger to take second place to exhaustion. Besides, the sun was starting to get low. She began to search for shelter.

It wasn't long before she'd found a good spot. A mighty tree had fallen, leaving a hollow underneath where its roots had pulled out of the ground. It was just big enough for a small girl to curl up in. There were spiders and beetles and such in the hollow, but nothing larger. It smelled of earth, not urine or musk that might indicate some larger animal used it as a den. She'd be hidden from three sides and only barely visible from the fourth.

Eleven crawled into the hollow and tucked her knees up close to her chest. Numbled by utter exhaustion, her mind didn't torment her with too much worry. She was asleep as soon as she closed her eyes.

* * * *

She awoke with a start. It was the middle of the night, and there was something in the forest looking for her. Even asleep she'd sensed the powerful presence, seeking her with its mind as she could seek for others.

The presence wasn't human. It didn't feel like the monster she'd met, but there were surely other monsters for other worlds.

She imagined a concrete wall surrounding her, shielding her from the seeking presence. The mental shield wall concealed her, but it also muffled her ability to sense outwards. She couldn't know if the presence was gone without dropping her protection, and as soon as she did that it would be able to feel her again. The only choice was to keep the shield up until morning or until the end of her strength, whichever came first. Probably the end of her strength. She felt better than when she'd first arrived in this world, but still wobbly and pained from expending too much of herself.

Lying awake, the hopelessness of her situation began to really sink in, and with that came loneliness. She would never see Mike again, never go with him to the Snow Ball. Whatever that was. She'd never see Dustin and Lucas either, or meet Will in person. She would never see Joyce or Chief Hopper, who might be adults who wanted things from her but seemed to be genuinely kind in spite of that. She would never eat another Eggo waffle. Whether the presence got her tonight or whether she managed to hold it off for another night or two, she was going to die in the wrong world. She would die alone after only the merest taste of what it meant to be NOT alone.

Maybe that was for the best. Eleven knew she was a killer. She had killed men with her powers, crushed out the sparks of their lives with the boot heel of her mind. The monster's crimes were her fault too. She had created the portal that let it into her world. She was a monster, the destroyer of one monster who was about to be destroyed by a third monster. That was the way of monsters.

Curled up tight in her hole, the small monster called Eleven began to cry silently.

She heard a sound that didn't belong in the forest. It was high-pitched, clear, metallic, inviting. What was the word for that sound? *Bells*. Why were there bells in a forest in the middle of the night? Surprised out of her self-pity, she almost crawled out of her hollow to investigate, but she clamped down on the impulse.

Underneath the sound of bells, she began to make out the sound of footfalls. The pattern sounded like a four-footed creature, not a person or something else that walked on two feet. The footfalls had a muffled sharpness to them, like the hoof beats of the deer she'd seen in the Hawkins woods. This thing sounded bigger than a deer, though. The creature was getting closer. It wasn't approaching steadily. It moved back and forth, sometimes moving away before turning back towards her. Searching.

She bit her lip, fighting the shivers that might make a sound and give her away. She focused as hard as she could on the mental wall that hid her, but still the bells and hooves drew closer. Perhaps it was tracking her scent. Perhaps it was stronger than her wall. She scrunched her eyes closed. It wasn't like seeing her doom would let her stop it.

Closer and closer the sounds came. They came right up to the entrance to her hiding place and stopped. It stayed there, surprisingly not reaching in to tear her limb from limb. Maybe it was too big to fit even a part of itself past the roots of the tree?

Seeking deep inside herself, Eleven thought she might have regained just enough strength for one attack, but she'd have to be in physical contact with the creature. She kept her eyes closed and waited for the creature to attack. After a tense minute, the creature snorted. It wasn't a threatening sound at all. Somehow it sounded exasperated. She didn't trust it.

Eleven had no further warning before the creature stuck its head into the hole and began...nuzzling? A large, warm head covered in soft fur bumped against her arm. She didn't wait for the nuzzle to turn into a bite. She dropped her shield and flung her mind at the

creature, reaching for the vulnerable blood vessels in its brain. If this creature worked like life forms on Earth, even a small rip there would kill or at least incapacitate it.

Her powers bounced off like she'd run into a stone wall.

:None of that, little one. I mean you no harm,: said a voice in her head. Eleven gasped.

The creature's teeth closed around the collar of her jacket and began to pull her up. She grabbed at the walls of her hiding place, but the soil crumbled between her fingers. The creature hauled her out of the hole and set her gently on the ground.

Eleven opened her eyes at last. The creature was four-legged and taller than a man. Its coat glowed white in the moonlight, and longer hair sprouted from its neck and tail. She was startled to recognize the shape of its long head: a horse. She'd never seen one in person, but Mike had told her the name of the animal being ridden by people on the covers of many of his fantasy books. The horse-creature was even wearing a saddle and bridle, which were decorated with silver bells.

After pulling her out of the hole, the horse made no move to touch her again. It just waited. The frantic pounding of Eleven's heart slowed down just a little. She didn't understand what was happening, but maybe she wasn't about to die after all. She sat up. Moving slowly, the horse leaned its head down to her level. She looked into its eye.

Oh. Oh, wow.

Meeting that impossibly blue eye was like falling through a portal into another world, except this world was the opposite of the Upside-Down in every way. She fell into safety and welcome and profound love.

:You have been so lost, but now you are found. Out of all the world, out of all the many worlds, I Choose you. Dear heart, never more will you be alone. You are mine and I am yours until the end of our days. Welcome home at last!:

The voice spoke in her mind, and she felt the truth of its—his!—words. All of Eleven's fear and loneliness and guilt crumbled away. The Companion (and somehow she knew that was the true name for the horse-shaped being) understood her from the shorn tips of her hair to the soles of her dirty feet to the deadly skills of her mind; he loved her utterly anyway. She felt small in the face of the power that enveloped her, yet also stronger than ever before.

She had never guessed it was possible to feel joy like this.

Gradually, Eleven's awareness returned to the physical world. The intensity of the feeling faded, but the sense of love and welcome did not vanish entirely. They were part of her now, as surely as her blood.

"Oh, Toraneph!" she whispered her Companion's name, throwing her arms around the stallion's neck and burying her head in his mane. Eleven felt herself crying, but she was so happy. Why was she crying when she was happy? It didn't make sense. None of this made sense, yet somehow it was true.

Eleven thought she could stay here forever. She leaned into the warm bulk of her Companion and listened to the soft sounds of the moonlit forest. After a few minutes her stomach betrayed her by rumbling. Toraneph huffed in amusement as he gently pulled back from her arms. He nudged her with his head, pushing her towards his saddle. He meant her to ride.

"Where?" she asked, wariness beginning to creep back into her mind.

:To find you food, then on to Haven,: Toraneph said in her mind. Eleven cringed as her head exploded in pain. Toraneph ducked his head, radiating a sense of apology. When he spoke again, his mental voice was barely above a whisper, though it still hurt.

:Chosen, I'm sorry! I fear you've greatly overstrained your mind before we met. You need to rest your Gifts. For the next few days I will mindspeaker to you only at great need. I am taking you to friends who will be able to answer your questions. I am still here for you, just quietly. Understand?:

She nodded, keeping the movement small to avoid jostling her aching

head. She had all sorts of questions. The moment of bonding had brought certain understandings—Toraneph's name, the fact that his kind were called Companions and were so much more than horses, that the bond between Companions and their Chosen humans would last a lifetime—but left others unanswered and raised many more. What was this place? What purpose had she been Chosen for? How did Toraneph know how to find her? Why her?

The more she thought the situation, the more it seemed too good to be true. Some human had put saddle and bridle on Toraneph. That meant some human had set him loose to find her. Eleven thought it likely that someone had sent him for her because they wanted to use her powers, just like Papa and the others who had raised her. Created her. Hurt her.

There was no malice in Toraneph's heart, of that she was certain. That didn't necessarily mean that he was taking her to those who wished her well. She thought of the man in the diner, who was so kind but accidentally led her pursuers right to her. Perhaps she should run away now, keep her freedom.

Toraneph leaned his head down and set his velvety nose on her neck, exhaling softly. The contact brought the love and support of the bonding back to the forefront of her mind. Tension she didn't realize had been building in her muscles eased again. Leaving him wasn't an option her heart could bear. She could trust him to protect her, she hoped. Besides, she wouldn't survive long in the forest alone, weakened as she was.

Decision made, Eleven faced the problem of getting onto Toraneph's back. The stirrup was too high for her to step into from the ground. She was about to try awkwardly hauling herself up with her arms when Toraneph moved a few steps away and tapped his hoof pointedly against the log that had fallen to make her shelter. She took the hint and scrambled onto the log, then from there into the saddle.

She clutched at the saddle as Toraneph began to walk. Being up so high on another living thing was disconcerting, especially in the unfamiliar forest at night. However, his walk was very smooth, not lurching like she'd feared. He wove around to avoid low branches that might knock her off, and when he couldn't he slowed down to

make sure she noticed and ducked. Bit by bit, she stopped hanging on with such desperation.

It wasn't long before Toraneph stepped out of the trees and onto a dirt road. It wasn't much, barely wide enough for one car (were there cars here?), but it was well-maintained. Free of the low branches and trip hazard roots, Toraneph sped up. The motion of his body changed under her, though it stayed smooth. Soon they were moving far faster than Mike ever went on his bike, even downhill. Not as fast as a car could go, but quite fast enough for a way of traveling without walls or seatbelts.

For the first few breaths it was terrifying. However, once more she began to relax when it became clear that Toraneph wouldn't let her fall. After a few minutes more, she began to enjoy the sensation of speed. She felt a smile blooming on her face.

She had no way to measure the time, but she thought they'd been traveling two or three hours when the sky began to lighten. As gold spread through the clouds, the road emerged from the forest to run through a cultivated field. Shortly after that, they came within sight of a little town.

The buildings were small and strange, all wood or stone, many with roofs that looked made of straw. Smoke came from most of the chimneys, even though it seemed too warm to need a fire. There were no power lines. She couldn't feel electricity anywhere.

There were a few people working in the fields. They were dressed mostly in earth tones with a few colorful accents. The clothing styles were odd, more like the people on the covers of Mike's books than anything she'd ever seen a real person wearing. The women wore long skirts, even though that seemed like a poor choice for doing physical labor in the field. Eleven really shouldn't criticize, though. She was riding in the pink dress, which she'd had to hike up pretty high to sit astride. The saddle chafed her legs.

Toraneph walked right up to the village, stopping at a stone building at the edge of town. A man wearing blue clothing with shiny brass buttons and some sort of symbol on the chest came out. He had graying dark hair, a neatly-trimmed beard, and a sword at his side.

Between the sword, the clothes (which somehow managed to suggest a uniform even if she'd never seen their like before), and his upright posture, Eleven thought he must be some sort of soldier.

Her heart started pounding in her chest. She knew soldiers. Most of them were bad news.

"We should go," she whispered to Toraneph. The Companion snorted and didn't move.

For the first time, Eleven picked up the reins and nudged Toraneph with her heels, trying to get him to leave. She was still too exhausted to defend them.

Toraneph shook his head and kept his feet planted. Eleven considered whether she ought to get down and run. Maybe Toraneph didn't understand what soldiers would do to possess and control someone like her. Or someone like him: his ability to speak in her mind would make him as much a target as she was. At the thought of soldiers taking Toraneph and shutting him away in the dark, her panic tripled.

She felt a river of calmness flowing from Toraneph to her. It made her head ache, though not as bad as the words had earlier. Still, in spite of the pain it eased her. He thought they were safe. He knew this world. She would have to trust his judgment for now.

"Good morning, lad!" the man called. His accent was odd, but intelligible. "Oh, I'm sorry, you're a lass, aren't you? I saw your hair before your face or dress. Apologies. And good day to you, honored Companion! Congratulations to the two of you!"

Eleven wasn't sure how to respond, so she didn't say anything. The man cocked his head.

"Where do you hail from, anyway? There's naught up the way you come from but trees and Scupsville, and there ain't any lasses of your age in that town, last I heard." His tone wasn't accusatory, just curious, but Eleven still found herself cringing. What would this soldier do if he found out where Eleven came from and what she was? Still, Toraneph gave no signs of fear. Probably he'd know if

there was danger here. Maybe answering would be less suspicious than silence.

"Far," Eleven said.

"Well, that's as vague an answer as ever I've heard, but I won't press you. Will you come inside and have some food? You look half-dead in the saddle!" he said.

Eleven shook her head and clung to the saddle. She didn't want to get down from Toraneph in the presence of this soldier. The Companion was her anchor and guide; she dared not take any risk that someone might separate them.

The man eyed her for a moment. "I won't take him away, lass. He's yours, or you're his. But if you'd rather not let him from your sight, I can bring you something to take on the road."

Eleven nodded slightly. She was famished.

The soldier went away, not into the little building he'd come out of but into one of the town's larger buildings, two stories with a sign out front with pictures of a stein and a bed. Eleven nervously shifted in the saddle.

After a few minutes the soldier emerged with a cloth bag.

"Here's some food. The inn's doing breakfast now, so there's plenty of pastries and sausages nice and hot, plus bread, cheese, and apples. There's also a waterskin for you. The next town's just a day's ride, but I packed you about three days worth of food just in case. But do stop. The Queen repays all the villages that help the newly Chosen with far more than we give to you."

That explained why the man was helping her, though it didn't exactly ease Eleven's mind. She didn't know what this Queen would want of her in return.

Eleven decided to worry about that after she'd left the village and eaten some food.

"Thank you," she said, accepting the bag of food. Toraneph nodded

his head at the soldier, then set off down the road.

As soon as they'd left behind the farms around the village and returned to forest, she asked Toraneph to stop. She slid to the ground and ate ravenously. Some of the pastries were savory, stuffed with egg and cheese and greens, while others were sweet and studded with berries. After eating three she began to slow down a bit. The feeling of being right on the edge of collapse started to fade. She ate a total of five pastries, two sausages, and an apple before her stomach's protest at overfilling grew stronger than the need to replenish her strength. Toraneph grazed while she ate, though he didn't go more than a few yards from her.

The sun was warm on her head. She thought about going to sleep right there, but decided it would be better to keep going in the day and stop at night. Toraneph responded to her decision as soon as she'd made it, going to stand beside a log to make it easier for her to mount. Her rear and legs protested getting back in the saddle. She made a face but otherwise ignored them. Being close to Toraneph was worth the soreness. They set off.

* * * *

Not long after, she heard hoofbeats in the distance, coming up the road in the direction Toraneph was headed. Eleven tensed and thought about asking Toraneph to leave the road. Before she could do that, Toraneph's ears pricked up. He whinnied a greeting, and a moment later they heard an answering whinny. The sound of bells became audible over the hoofbeats.

A horse and rider appeared. No, not a horse; it was another Companion. The person riding it was dressed all in white. As they got closer, Eleven saw that the rider was a slender woman, though she was wearing trousers. She had curly brown hair threaded with gray cut just below her chin and expressive dark eyes. Companion and rider came to a stop close to Eleven, though not quite close enough to threaten her personal space.

"Hello, youngling. What's your name?" The woman's voice was gentle. Eleven hesitated before answering until she felt a gentle reassurance from Toraneph.

"Eleven," she said.

"Is it customary to name children after numbers where you're from?" the woman asked, a crease appearing between her brows.

Eleven shook her head. She hadn't met enough other people to know what counted as a normal name, but the reactions of everyone she'd told her name after escaping told her enough to know that people were not supposed to be called numbers.

"Would you like me to call you Eleven, or is there some other name you'd prefer?" the woman asked. Eleven hesitated. She could ask to be called El, but she didn't want anyone she didn't trust to call her by that name. When Eleven didn't answer, the woman went on. "Eleven it is for now, but if you want a change later, just tell me. I want you to feel welcome."

Eleven nodded, just a small amount.

"You must be very confused right now. I get the sense you're one of those who hasn't even the vaguest idea what a Companion's choice means. Normally we let the newly Chosen get to Haven and explain everything to them there, but our Seers had visions of a newly Chosen girl who would be in need of counsel right away, so I came to seek you out. Did that great beast of yours tell you anything useful yet?"

"His name is Toraneph," Eleven said. "He's not a beast."

"Of course! I've been acquainted with Toraneph for years. That's the only reason I tease him. Right, Toraneph?" the woman said.

Toraneph nodded his head and stepped a little closer to the woman and her Companion. He clearly knew and trusted them. Eleven decided to ask one of her questions.

"He told me Companions choose people for life, but not why." That was about as many words as Eleven ever put together at once.

The woman shook her head ruefully. "I used to think I was exceptionally ignorant when I was Chosen, but the Companions just keep digging up even sadder cases. You're not from Valdemar, are you?"

Eleven shook her head. She'd never heard of Valdemar. It must be the name of this country or region.

"Companions Choose people to be Heralds. This white uniform I'm wearing means I'm a Herald. The Heralds serve the kingdom of Valdemar in many ways: mediating disputes, administering the law, carrying messages, keeping watch on the state of the land and people, diplomacy with neighboring countries, whatever is needed. Sometimes we are called on to fight, but only in the name of protecting others. All the people they Choose have something in the way of Gifts, meaning special powers of the mind like being able to move objects or sense thoughts or see the future. But more importantly the Companions only Choose those with a good heart."

Mind powers she had, but a good heart? That wasn't Eleven. She'd let loose a monster. She'd killed people. Her fear rose as she wondered what would happen when she was found out.

A wave of love and reassurance flowed from Toraneph.

:I see your heart, Chosen, and there is none better,; he said in her mind. Her head throbbed painfully, but the weight of belief in his words was a comfort.

The Herald paused in her speech, apparently seeing the conflict on Eleven's face.

"Many doubt whether they were rightly Chosen, but let me tell you, the Companions are very, very good at finding the right people in the unlikeliest of places. Whatever your past, you are welcome here. One of my best friends grew up a thief. The man who trained me in weapons used to fight for an enemy army. I trust Toraneph's judgment. Will you trust him too?" she asked.

Eleven thought about it. She had set loose a monster, but she had also banished it. She had killed men, but only to protect herself or

her friends. She hadn't enjoyed it. Maybe she wasn't a monster all the way through.

"I'll try," she said.

"That's all we ask," the Herald said. "Now, being a Herald is a difficult job, and a dangerous one. I've been through rough times for this work, and some people I loved have lost their lives. We would never force anyone into this. If you don't want it, you can say so. We'll help you find some other way to take care of yourself. But it is also an incredibly rewarding job. You will be part of a community that will care for you just as you are. We will help you and protect you with our lives."

"Friends," Eleven whispered.

"Yes, friends. You start with Toraneph, and me if you'll have me, but there are many others who will be glad to call you friend too. Not everyone in Valdemar means well, but within the circle of Heralds you will find so much welcome. Now, will you let me accompany you to Haven? That's the capitol city here."

"To do what?" Eleven asked.

"Learn, at first. Learn about Valdemar, and how to ride better, and how to use your Gifts. Eventually you'll go to work as a Herald, when you're ready. You would have a chance to be a young girl among friends first," said the Herald.

Eleven didn't think she really had a choice. She'd had so few choices in her life. But she had chosen to kill the monster when she thought it would cost her life. Instead that act had brought her here. Here, to Toraneph, who had Chosen her. Here, where a soldier had given her food and sent her on her way instead of trying to use her as a weapon. Here, where she wouldn't be the only one who could do strange things with her mind.

If the Herald was to be believed (and Eleven caught no trace of a lie in her), this new world wouldn't give her safety, but it had people who might stand beside her against danger in a way that nobody else she'd ever known had been both willing and able to do. Mike and the

other people she'd met after running away had tried, and she loved them for it, but there was only so much they could do. Maybe evil was part of every world, but Eleven liked the idea that she wouldn't have to face it down alone any more.

"I'll come with you," she said. After a moment's hesitation, she added, "You can call me El."

"Thank you, El. I just realized I never told you my name! I'm Queen's Own Herald Talia. Now, are you feeling up to riding at speed?" Talia smiled at her.

Eleven nodded. Toraneph was the one doing all the work. Sore and tired as she was, she could handle hanging on.

"Good. Rolan, let's go home," Talia said. Her Companion wheeled and set off running, closely followed by Toraneph.

Eleven leaned low, fingers tangling in Toraneph's mane. The ground of a beautiful new world sped beneath their feet. Faster and faster they went, onwards into the future.

Author's Note:

Feel free to come say hi on [tumblr](#) or [pillowfort](#)!